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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND SHORTLEY
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: STATE OF DARFUR: THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Classified By: CDA Cameron Hume, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: CDA Hume traveled to Darfur from February 19-21 to gauge the status of the political process, monitor the conditions for humanitarian operations, and assess the status of the peace-keeping operation stipulated in the Addis Ababa and Abuja agreements of November 2006. In visits to Nyala, Zalingei, El Geneina, and El Fasher, he met with Sudanese government officials, UN agency heads, and representatives of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). This message--the first of three cables on these meetings--focuses on the political process, which is suffering due to ethnic fragmentation, the Sudanese government's premature decision to establish the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA), and the negative influence of neighboring countries. End summary.

Ethnic Fragmentation

¶2. (C) The fragmentation of ethnic groups is a growing obstacle to advancing the political process in Darfur. UN officials and INGO representatives in the three state capitals of Darfur characterized the situation as one of ever-changing intra-tribal alliances. They emphasized that the crisis is no longer simply armed Arab groups, with the support of the Sudanese government, fighting African tribes. These tribes have splintered into rival factions that "shift almost daily"--due to the personal ambitions of individual rebel leaders, attempts by the Government to cause divisions, and the influence of neighboring governments. This splintering makes it impossible to identify consistent interlocutors to guarantee humanitarian access or participate in a constructive political process. The ongoing fragmentation has delayed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatory commanders conference in North Darfur. "The international community needs to put equal political pressure on the rebel movements as it does on the Government," said the head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Nyala.

¶3. (C) The disconnect between the political leaders and the populations they purport to represent was a common frustration among the UN and NGO representatives in Darfur. Fur leader Abdul Wahid al-Nur continues to command significant public support in his home region of Jebel Marra, despite having been outside of Sudan for at least 17 months. Some civil society leaders recognize the destructiveness of this disconnect. In a meeting with CDA Hume in El Fasher, members of the Darfur Forum criticized the majority of non-signatory leaders who were in Europe, Chad or Libya rather than in Darfur.

14. (C) UN officials in El Fasher recommended delaying the Darfur Darfur Dialogue and Consultation (DDDC) due to an inability to identify a reasonable number of participants. They added that, with support for the DPA lagging, public opinion is against the DDDC, which is tainted by its association with the agreement. Similar fragmentation has occurred within the Arab tribes. The UNOCHA head in Zalingei said that the Arabs had divided into three groups: 1) Those that remain independent from external forces, 2) Those that have allied with the National Redemption Front, and 3) Those that remain allied with the Sudanese government. Minawi told CDA Hume that Arab tribesmen in the Muhajeria area of South Darfur have reached out to him to express grievances against Sudanese government policies.

Transitional Darfur Regional Authority

15. (C) The Sudanese government's decision to initiate appointments to the TDRA, without the prior concurrence of Senior Assistant to the President and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) leader Minni Minawi, will exacerbate the intra-ethnic divisions, according to UN and NGO leaders. In all three states, the Government has begun to divide localities according to tribal control and to appoint DPA and Declaration of Commitment (DoC) signatories to both state and local positions. Overall, the SLM/Minawi will hold an estimated 50 percent of the positions in the government, lessening the incentives for the non-signatories to join the peace process. DoC signatory and SLM/Free Will leader Abdulgasseem Imam was appointed governor of West Darfur on February 21. Rumored for weeks, UN and INGO officials predicted that Abdulgasseem's appointment would further divide

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the Fur community, as he has led regular attacks on the forces allied with Abdul Wahid al-Nur.

Influence of Outside Actors

16. (C) Sudanese government officials, UN agency heads, and INGO leaders were unanimous in their condemnation of Chad, Eritrea, and Libya's negative influence on the political process. Given Sudanese-Libyan tensions and the lingering disunity of the rebel movements, they were skeptical of a Libyan-sponsored dialogue for non-signatories in Tripoli. On the eve of this initiative, the chief of the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in El Fasher said that the non-signatories "give you the answers that you want to hear" and were unlikely to commit to a political process at this time given the plethora of regional agendas.

Comment

17. (C) The fragmentation of rebel groups makes it difficult to launch a political dialogue that the Sudanese government says it wants. The Sudanese government has fostered divisions within the rebel movements, but it now complains about the consequences. Sudan's policy of the past six months has shown again that Darfur cannot be stabilized through military action. No solution will be found in a single meeting of the non-signatories. UN Envoy Jan Eliasson and AU Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim have to create a process and a structure that engages rebel leaders in sustained talks. End comment.
HUME